



Champions of the Colosseum

Core Statement

In *Champions of the Colosseum*, you step into the sandals of a gladiator fighting in the majestic amphitheatre during the peak of the Roman Empire.

Board Game Trailer

https://youtu.be/-pUK0RX_K1U?si=L0U6uHrH4ICdSB7s

Contextualization and Inspiration

Champions of the Colosseum was inspired by many different games. The combat portion was inspired by the (now discontinued) card game Star Wars: Destiny. The concept of upgrading your characters as the game progressed was inspired by engine-builder games such as Terraforming

Mars or Three Sisters. The card drafting portion in the first iteration of the game was inspired by Terraforming Mars as well, but that was changed and no longer resembles it.

3 Pillars

How can the players feel stronger as they progress?

- As the game progresses, players will acquire weapons that roll more dice and acquire more equipment. This means that players will have more to do after each preparation phase. Since the players can do more and more, it leads to them feeling stronger and stronger.

What is the setting of the game?

- Champions of the Colosseum takes place in the peak of the Roman Empire, during a tournament that brings the strongest fighters from across the lands to compete and earn the favour of the pantheon!

Why do the players get stronger?

- The players getting stronger symbolises their fighters improving and honing their skills. If this were a real event, these fighters would be training as much as possible, reviewing their past battles to find where they could do better, and overall becoming stronger to win the tournament.

Thematic Backstory

In the year 117 AD, the Grand Colosseum in the heart of Rome is hosting its annual **Conquest for Glory** tournament! Challengers come from across the lands to compete in front of massive crowds and earn the favour of the gods themselves!

Among the many that join the event, these are the stories of the playable characters in the game:

Aurelia is a famed Centurion in the **Legio Primus Fulgor**. She has honed her skills through years of training, and excels in her defensive abilities.

Barnabus was never the smartest. He grew up in the heart of Rome, and was mocked by other children. However, he was incredibly strong. He got a job moving barrels of wine up a hill to the winery to be sold, and found it was faster to carry them himself instead of using the wagon.

Cassius spends his days hunting game. For more than a decade, he has made his living selling hide and meat he earned on his hunts. Over that time, his archery skills have become greater than all others.

Calpurnia has little that is known about her. She was never seen entering the city, and nobody knows where she goes between the battles. The crowd is mystified by her abilities, which seem supernatural for someone like her.

Drusilla is a Gladiator by trade, and has been doing it for years. She started as an underdog, but her unique swordsmanship ability became known across the spectators incredibly quickly. Her acts of bravery combined with her charismatic personality lead to her name becoming the most well-known among all gladiators in the colosseum.

Lucius is a well known gladiator. He always puts on a gruesome show for the massive crowds that come to see him fight. He shows no mercy on the battlefield, and will do whatever he can to earn an advantage over his opponents.

Lysandra grew up with a fascination with herbs and other oddities that, when combined in *just* the right way, became powerful concoctions. This fascination grew, until she was able to open her own shop selling them. Lysandra plans to win using these potions to give her the upper hand in combat.

Maximus is a gladiator who is working his way up the ranks. He is incredible with a sword, working as if the steel was a part of his own body. The finesse he possesses has caught the attention of the people who watch his fights, and he has high hopes to place first in this tournament.

Octavia is the leader of an illegal fight club in the city. She has witnessed much worse than anything in the colosseum can offer, and she knows it. While not the strongest physically, she uses tactics to disorientate or distract her enemies while she moves in to strike.

Triton is the demigod son of Neptune himself. He wields the power of the sea and is not afraid to use it to his advantage.

Varro is accustomed to bribing his way into anything. He is among the wealthiest in the whole empire, and intends to prove that he is more than a lazy aristocrat by winning the tournament.

Vulcanus works as a famous blacksmith, supplying anyone with the coin to afford his expensive but exquisitely made tools and armour. Working in the forge has made him quite strong, and he has the physical strength to wield any of the weapons he forges well.

Visual Gallery of Game Components

Champions of the Colosseum has a total of 180 cards, which is quite a lot for this document. As per an email with the professor, we have a few cards that show off core mechanics of the game.

All images for the game's cards can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1TdcSmDYDZVj51VO1OWSFO_Yt1CzjZBo-

Character Cards: (Showing 4 of 12)



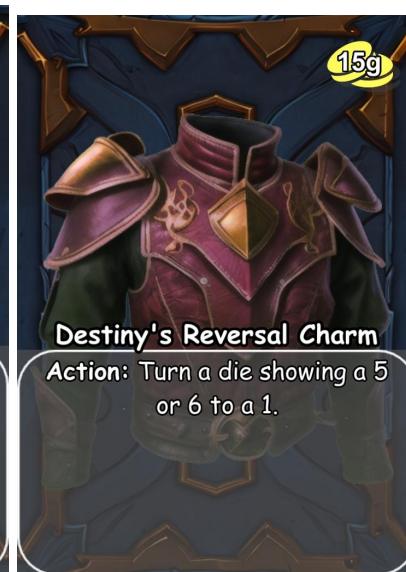
Basic Weapons: (Showing 3 of 18)



Advanced Weapons: (Showing 6 of 60)



Equipment: (Showing 6 of 60)



Betting Cards: (3 of 30)



Game Rules

Setup

First, shuffle the following decks and place them on the table:

- Advanced Weapons
- Equipment
- Bets

Then, determine who is on each team. The game is played in teams of two, and we recommend each team plays on the opposite side of the table.

Next, deal two fighter cards to each player, then everyone chooses one to be their chosen fighter. You may talk to your teammates during this stage to determine which fighters each of you will have. After everyone has chosen, deal three basic weapon cards to each player and repeat this process.

Once this is complete, set up the market by laying out three equipment cards and three advanced weapon cards face up.

Setup Checklist:

- Players have been divided up into two teams
- Each player has one fighter card and one basic weapon card
- The market has three equipment cards and three advanced weapon cards.

Fighting Phase

In the fighting phase, each team will alternate taking actions to try and defeat the other.

At the start of the battle, each team is dealt three **Bet** cards. They each collectively decide which to use for this battle. Set the others aside. Then, each team rolls all of their weapon dice. The team that rolled the lowest total value goes first. (*See Below*)

During the fighting phase, any team may take any of the following actions:

1. Activate a weapon (Attack)
 - a. **Exhaust** one of your team's weapons and roll a number of dice equal to the attack value on the card.
2. Resolve Damage
 - a. Choose any number of your team's dice. For each of them, deal damage equal to the number shown on that die to an opponent. Then place those dice back on their weapon card.
3. Activate Equipment
 - a. Choose one of your equipment or weapon cards with the **Action** keyword. **Exhaust** it, then do what the card says.

4. Pass

- a. You do nothing, and it is back to the opposing team to take an action.
- b. When both teams pass, the round is over.

At the end of each round, ready each **fighter**, **weapon**, and **equipment**. If there are any dice in play, remove them. The team that went second last round takes the first action this round.

Exhausting, Readyng, and Activating

To **exhaust** a card, simply turn the card sideways.

To **ready** a card, turn the card upright.

To use the **Action** of a card, it must be in the **ready** position. If it is, **exhaust** it, then do the effect listed on the card.

Removing, Rerolling, and Turning Dice

To **remove** a die, place it on its associated weapon card.

To **reroll** a die, the player who has the associated weapon card rolls the die again.

To **turn** a die, the player who has the associated weapon card changes the value of the die to a value instructed by the effect that turns the die. (*For example, an effect says to turn a die to a side showing one more. If the die originally shows a 3, the die will be turned to a 4.*)

Damage and Healing

When a fighter takes damage, place damage tokens on it equal to the amount of damage dealt. When a fighter has more damage on it than its total health, they are **defeated**. (See *Fighter Defeat*)

When a fighter is healed, remove damage tokens from it equal to the amount of health restored. If a fighter would heal more than the amount of damage it has, simply remove all damage. A fighter cannot be healed above their maximum health.

Fighter Defeat

When a fighter has more damage on it than its total health, they are **defeated** and the following happens:

- Remove all dice associated with their weapon(s) and place them on the weapon card.
- Remove all damage from the fighter.
- Turn the fighter card face down. If it was **exhausted** face up, it is still **exhausted** face down.

A **defeated** fighter cannot take the following actions:

- Activate their weapon.
- Use any **Actions** on their equipment.
- Use any **Actions** on the front side of their fighter card.

If a fighter had any abilities on the front side of their fighter card, those no longer apply. Instead, each fighter has an ability on the back side of their card that they can only use when they are defeated.

End of the Battle

At the end of each battle, the following happens (**in order**):

- Remove all damage from all fighters, then turn any **defeated** fighters face up.
- **Remove** all dice.
- **Ready** all fighters, equipment, and weapons.
- The team that won gets **1 valor**.
- Each team gets gold equal to the amount determined from their **valor**.
- The winning team gets gold equal to the amount from the **bet** card they chose at the start of the round.

Valor

At the end of each battle, each team will get an amount of gold determined by their valor level. See the table below:

Your Valor	0	1	2	3
Gold Earned	25	15	10	Win

Winning the Game

When any team has 3 valor, that team wins the game.

Preparation Phase

In the preparation phase, players spend gold earned from their previous battles to train, increase their strength, and become more powerful.

Each team will be able to buy weapons and equipment from the market, as well as upgrade their characters. Starting with the team that lost the last battle.

To buy from the market:

- Spend gold equal to the value of the card.
- Place the card next to the fighter it is attached to. If it exceeds the maximum amount of that type of card, you must discard one of the others or move it to another fighter on your team.
 - A fighter can only have one weapon card.
 - A fighter can only have two equipment cards.
- Then, replace the card you bought with another of that type.

Once per preparation phase, while it is your team's turn in the market, you may discard one weapon or equipment in the market and replace it with another of that type.

After the current team is finished in the market, the next team takes their turn. After both teams have finished, the fighting phase begins.

FAQ / Rules Clarifications

- If a card says “you,” it refers to the fighter the card is attached to.
- The cards in the market stay there during the fighting phase.
- Rolling and Rerolling are the same thing. If an effect triggers when you roll a number, it also triggers when you reroll another number.
- Turning a die is not the same as rolling.

Card-Specific FAQs:

- Net
 - The person who controls the net is the one that is rerolling the die.
- Impenetrable Armour
 - If a damage source does not specify the damage type, it is neither ranged or melee. This does not apply.

Group Meeting Log and Playtesting Log

Group 34 Meeting: October 3, 2023

Notetaker: Jordan Johns

Meeting Minutes: 3:00 to 3:45

Location: Online, through Discord

Group Members who attended:

- Jordan Johns
- Devon Braun-Santos
- Wahid Sanjan
- Bruce Weng

Things to go over:

1. Ideas for the Game
 - a. Is it feasible to do? Needs one of:
 - i. Print-to-play
 - ii. Prototype which a real board game can be produced
 - iii. Prototype for a digital board game
 - b. Needs:
 - i. Randomness
 - ii. Strategy and Skill
 - iii. Characters and a thematic backstory
2. How should we playtest?
 1. In person? Tabletop simulator?

Meeting Minutes: October 13, 2023

Notetaker: Jordan Johns

Meeting Minutes:

- 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Teammates Present:

- Jordan Johns
- Wahid Sanjan
- Devon Braun-Santos

Meeting Goal:

- First Playtest
- Find glaring issues with format and cards

Meeting Notes:

- **Card Issues**
 - o Stunlock is possible
 - Screaming Shield + Hypnotic Pocketwatch means your opponent can't do anything. This is bad!
 - o Betting cards are too random. No control at all over what bets you get. This means it's annoying to get useless bets and game-breaking to get some others. Possible fixes:
 - Nerf betting cards
 - If they have a smaller ceiling and a higher floor it'll control randomness.
 - Basically, if instead the range of money from bets is \$0-\$30 it becomes \$2-\$10 it'll mean that you get screwed over less
 - Choose bets you get
 - For example, each player looks at 2 betting cards and chooses which one to use for the battle
 - All of the above?
 - o Basic weapons feel weird. Shuffling into their own deck when you replace them and never drawing them past turn 1 is strange in practice
 - A possible fix is you don't replace your basic weapon. You always have the starting weapon, plus an advanced weapon (if you've bought one).
- Game should be 2v2 or 3v3 instead of 1v1 pairings
 - o This fixes so many problems
 - Can't stunlock
 - See card issues
 - Games last a better amount of time
 - Less instakills, less "everyone rolls 1 so we do basically nothing"
 - Encourages teamwork and planning with others instead of solo
 - Less cards need to be dealt and sorted
 - Not a huge deal, but less annoying this way
 - Can't be paired against someone on the opposite side of the table

- o Issues the 2v2 format has:
 - Can the game be played with an odd number of people? If so, what happens?
 - One person controls two fighters
 - A special role? Like an emperor or something
 - Because we are in a group of 5, we'll have an odd number of people playing
 - Not a gameplay issue, just a technical one

Meeting Minutes: October 18, 2023

Notetaker: Jordan Johns

Meeting Goals:

1. 2nd Playtest
2. Find and fix issues with the game

Meeting Results:

1. Game was played with these teams:
 - a. Devon + Bruce VS Wahid and Virgilio
 - b. Jordan is spectator/notetaker
2. Things to fix:
 - a. Change the card backs to match (No ranged, melee on the back)
 - b. Determine how much money each team gets for winning:
 - i. 15 for winner
 - ii. First loss is 8, second loss is 10, everything else is 12
3. Resolve any number of dice instead of from the same source

Preparation Phase:

- Shared shop, losers buy first
 - o Start of prep phase refill the shop

Betting Cards:

- Each side chooses their betting cards for themselves
- Bets apply to the people to choose it
 - o Ex. A bet card says, "If you win, you get \$5." You choose it, and lose. You do not get the \$5, but neither does your opponent.

- All betting cards need to be changed.

Boons:

- Too many different things
- Remove boons, turn them into equipment if possible

Valor:

- Each time a team wins a battle, they get 1 valor. The first team to 5 valor wins

Fighters

- Death ability on back that relates to the character
 - o Ex. Vivictus is all about dealing damage, so when he dies he gets the ability: "Whenever an enemy takes damage, they take 1 more."
 - o Ex. Maximus is all about melee weapons, so he has "**Action:** Increase the value of a melee die by 2."

Meeting Minutes: November 02, 2023

Notetaker: Bruce Weng

Meeting Goals:

1. 3rd playtest
2. Test out several major changes:
 - a. Valor (you win the game when your team has 5 valor)
 - b. Betting cards rework
 - c. Shared shop
 - d. Fighters' new death ability
 - e. Two fighters controlled by one player (Potential 3v3)
 - f. Many new cards were added (Boons cards merge into Equipment cards)
 - g. Card balance

Meeting Results:

1. Game was played with these teams:
 - a. Team A: Jordan & Devon vs Team B: Bruce (Controlling two fighters)

2. New feature:

- a. Shared shop: Both teams share the same shop (4 equipment cards + 3 advanced weapons.) The team that lost in the previous round gets priority to buy. One per preparation phrase, you can draw a new card from the deck to replace one from the shop.
- b. Counters on the betting cards are capped at 6.
- c. Fighters have maximum health (shown on the cards.) You cannot heal yourself more than your maximum health.

3. Things to fix:

- a. Snowballing still exists (Team A earned over 25+ gold after round one by using Varro's ability.) Implementing a new earning system based on how many Valor your opponent team has.
- b. The effects of some cards are too similar, or just a better version among those cards.
 - i. Net (Basic weapon) is really overpowered for its rarity. Change it into the advanced weapon instead.
 - ii. Two betting cards have basically the same effect, but one is better.
 - iii. Shortbow needs some minor rework. It is a better version of other cards that can also reroll.
 - iv. Emblem of might, might be too cheap.
- c. Fighters with the wrong image.
- d. Fighter cards layout (to remove the black box at the top left.)

4. Things to add:

- a. More weapon images.
- b. More equipment images.
- c. New fighter cards back.

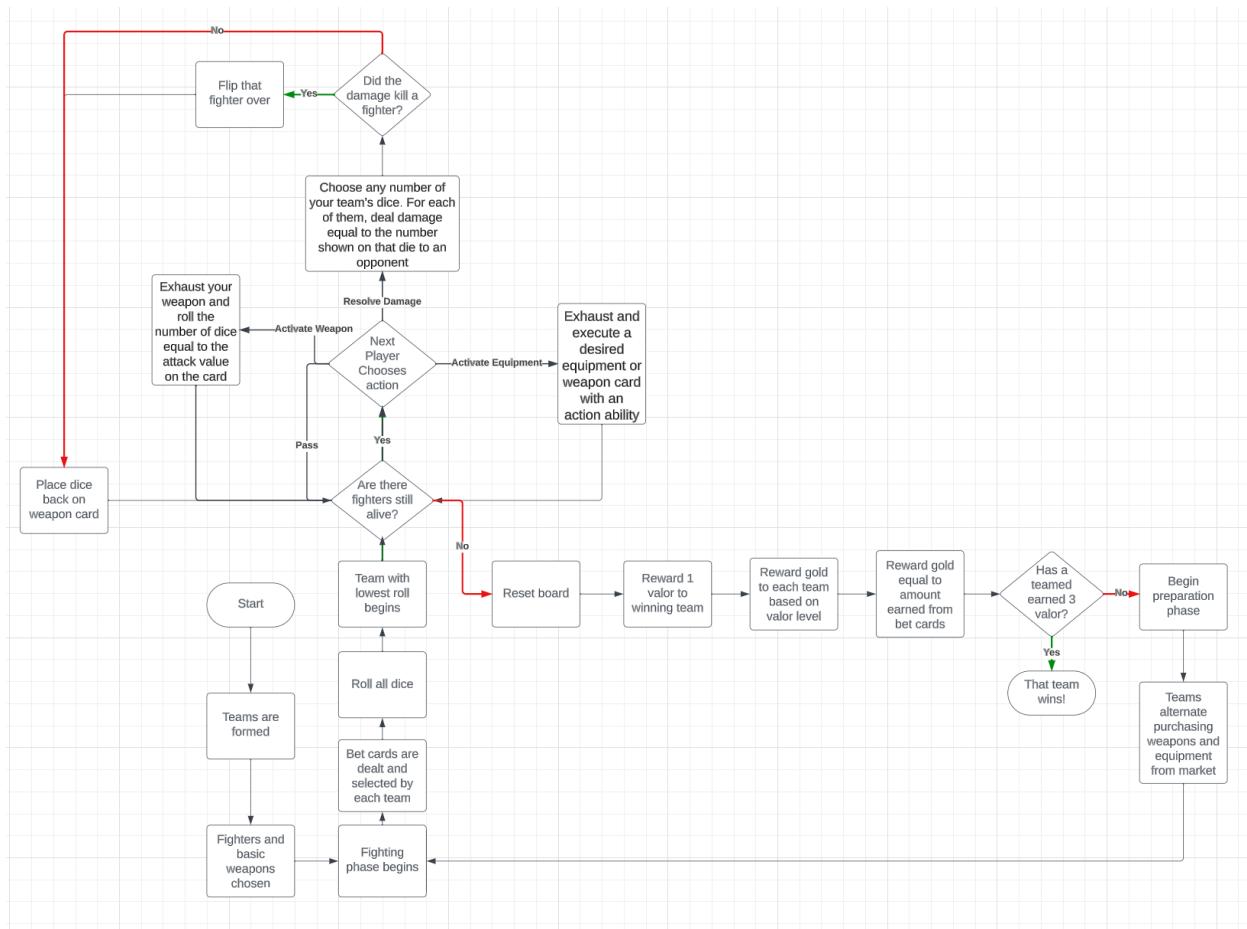
Notes from meeting:

- We're going to use the Champions of the Colosseum game idea
 - o Randomness in cards that are drawn
 - o Skill in choosing when to buy, when to save, etc
- Playtesting online or in person works for everyone, we can try both and see what's best
 - o Burnaby Campus if in person

Things to do

- Come up with cards for the game. Next meeting we will have a bunch of cards, find a time to playtest, then see how everything plays.

Flowcharts



Analysis of Game Balance

The internal balance of Champions of the Colosseum was tricky to figure out. The game started out promising, but there were cards that were unfun to play with and others that were incredibly weak. The game itself

also felt very slow and clunky to play, so changes were made to improve the play experience for everyone involved as well.

The first form of the game involved players being paired up with an opponent at random, then playing a 1v1 battle against that player. This did not work well for a number of reasons. Some players would have games that lasted much longer than others, it was difficult to play against someone who was sitting really far away from you, but the biggest issue is that the victor of each battle seemed to be determined after the first round. This meant that the players felt like they were sitting through something they had little control over, and their skill was largely irrelevant. After a few iterations, we decided on turning it into a team based game. That solved the problem of being paired against someone far away as each team is on the opposite side of the table, nobody was waiting for the other game to finish, and most importantly, it gave players their agency back. Having multiple people in the game means that if one player is getting hard-counteried by another, they have a teammate who can help get them out of that situation. They are able to strategize with each other, making the game much more social instead of simply quietly thinking to themselves as they make their game choices.

Another big change that was made was the market. Originally, each player was dealt two weapon cards and three equipment cards that only they could buy. This was a lot of dealing cards, because preparation phases came up frequently and deck sizes were small at this point, which meant there was a lot of reshuffling and a lot of players buying nothing and the preparation phase being a waste of time. To fix this, the market became a game space that didn't change between rounds. This allowed players to be able to think ahead on what they would buy next time they get a chance, and be able to think about what to save up their hard-earned gold for. The ability to exchange one card in the market for a new one was also added, which allowed players to find something new to buy if nothing caught their eye. This version of the market was not only more fun to play with, but also involved players seeing much less unique cards. We found that in a typical play session, you would only see roughly 11-15 equipment cards and even

less of the weapon cards. This meant a few things: Cards needed to be more self-sufficient (Not rely on other cards to do something) and players needed to adapt instead of waiting until they got the best cards for the best strategy every time they played the game.

Since cards needed to be self-sufficient with those market changes, we rebalanced what we already had into versions that didn't rely on rare mechanics or specific cards. For example, there was originally a different damage type we called Divine damage that we entirely removed from the game. The damage type was intended to be rare, as if the gods themselves were blessing this weapon or equipment, but that meant they didn't appear often in game. The solution was to remove it entirely. This meant that the cards that relied on divine damage weren't useless if no weapons appeared in the course of the game, and it meant that cards that cared about melee or ranged damage were more consistent. For example, one equipment card read "Whenever you deal divine damage, deal 1 more. **Action:** if your weapon is divine, **ready** it." This equipment was quite costly, as it was incredibly powerful if you happened to get a weapon forged by the pantheon. However, it was entirely useless otherwise. Quite often, cards like that clogged up the shop and were the cards players chose to exchange in the preparation phase most of the time. This was a play pattern we didn't like, so this was the solution.

Other than that, we spent a majority of our group meetings playtesting the game and balancing the cards to make sure that they were not only well-costed for their effect, but they were fun to play with. One card that went through many iterations was the Hypnotic Pocketwatch, which reads, "**Action:** Remove all dice." When the game was first being tested, this was incredibly unfun. If you went second, your opponent would simply remove your weapon's dice and attack you while you sat there helplessly. In addition, it created a hard lock with another card that read: "**Action: Exhaust** your opponent's weapon." In the 1v1 format, you would either have your weapon exhausted (meaning you can't use it this round) or you would roll out your weapon's dice and have them all removed immediately. This 2-card combo was solved with the introduction of team combats, but

other unfun cards still existed. Cards that were too weak were less of an issue because players simply would not buy them, but cards too strong felt like pure chance on who could buy them first. Slowly changing the cards to be balanced amongst each other worked incredibly well, and the game plays much better now than ever.

Another change that impacted balance was when we were looking at the differences between removing, rerolling, or turning dice. The strongest form of staying alive turned out to be removing your opponent's dice. Which, in hindsight, makes sense. If your enemy rolls a 6, removing it is roughly the same as gaining 6 health. We changed many cards by bouncing between these, changing an effect that rerolls to one that removes, for example. The biggest offender was actually a basic weapon card, the Net. It began with the text: "**Action:** Remove a die." This meant that instead of attacking, you could nullify an opponent's attack. This was WAY too strong, and it was clear from the start. It was changed to: "**Action:** turn an opponent's die to a 1." Which was better, but still very strong. It basically went from "gain health equal to an opponent's die" to "gain health equal to an opponent's die minus one" which was hardly a change. It did allow for some cards to work better, such as cards that improve the value of a die so your opponent could wait for you to turn it to a 1 before upgrading it. Finally, the Net was changed to have "**Action:** Reroll an opponent's die." Rerolling was by far the worst of the options, when considering purely power. It was also the most fun. When you reroll an opponent's 6, they will probably be getting a worse result. When you reroll their 4, they could easily get an even higher number. This created suspense when you made them reroll, and made you think about if it was worth it to reroll at all. It made the card fun, while still being a fairly strong card to give yourself some extra surviving power.

Overall, this game was very difficult to balance but was a rewarding journey. As a team, we feel like the game is in a great spot to play, and is fun to do so.

Description of Game Dynamics

In "Champions of the Colosseum," players engage in a dynamic board gaming experience shaped by various strategic elements. The game introduces trade-offs during fighter selection, requiring players to choose between different attributes such as health, level-ups, and special abilities. The betting system adds a layer of strategy, as players select cards influencing their income for the round, with each card favouring specific playstyles. Weapons, a pivotal aspect of the game, present trade-offs such as dealing significant damage at a cost to the player or offering unique actions. The alternating order of play between teams demands strategic coordination, impacting the outcome of battles. Economic management plays a crucial role, with shared money requiring players to budget and strategically purchase weapons and upgrades. A successful strategy that emerged is intentionally lost-streaking and choosing bets that give players more gold as they lose to stack up gold and buy powerful equipment to dominate the competition. Overall, the game dynamics of "Champions of the Colosseum" converge to create a multifaceted and dynamic gaming environment that encourages strategic thinking, teamwork, and thematic immersion.

Description of Trade-Offs

Picking your Fighter:

The first trade-off players face. Players must select their fighters from two drawn cards. Each fighter has different health, level-ups, actions, and defeated actions. For instance, players must decide if they want a low-health, healing fighter, or a high health, high-damage fighter. Some fighters may feel weaker initially, but have powerful level-ups so players that plan ahead will be rewarded. Fighters are kept the entire so this is the most important trade-off for players to consider.

Betting:

At the beginning of each round players select a single bet card from three drawn. Bet cards influence how much money players make throughout that round. Bet cards often favour certain styles of gameplay. For instance, a bet card that rewards players whenever a dice is flipped, is more valuable to players who have the ability to frequently flip dice.

Weapons:

Weapons are another choice players make at the beginning and throughout gameplay. Every weapon has trade-offs. Some deal substantial damage, but may damage the player in the process while others may deal minimal damage, but come with special actions. Weapons can compliment or counter the player's own fighter's abilities, or that of their teammate's.

Order of Play:

Gameplay always alternates back and forth between teams. The order in which players within a team choose to take, can greatly affect the damage dealt and taken for a team, actions, bet cards, and equipment that can be used, and can determine who lives and who dies in situations where one player is low health.

Spending Money:

At the beginning of every round, players have the option to purchase weapons, equipment, or upgrades to their fighters. Players must prioritize weaknesses and strategic extensions to their current game style and budget their money accordingly. Because money is shared amongst each team, teammates must strategize purchases that benefit the team as a whole.

Description of Session Length

A typical play session lasts between 1 and 2 hours.

Group Member Contribution

This section details exactly what each group member did in this project.

Bruce

- Cards creation
- Cards visual design (images, layout)
- Playtesting

Devon

- Flowchart creation
- Description of tradeoffs and dilemmas
- Assisted in creating cards
- Assisted in naming cards
- Playtesting

Jordan

- Rules Document Writeup
- The Quantitative Analysis of Game Balance
- Character Backstories and Game Lore
- Initial Game Concept (Including creation of the first cards the game was playtested with)
- Playtesting

Virgilio

- Recorded and edited the trailer
- Assisted in implementing lost-streaking
- Playtesting
- Description of game dynamics

Wahid

- Assisted in card naming and creation
- Playtesting

- Assisted in game balances
- Created audio narration and video editing for the trailer